



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

May 18, 2006

For immediate release

- 1. June 30- last day for CRP contract renewal**
- 2. Farming practices, habitat restoration improve Iowa's trout streams**
- 3. Open feedlot rules effective May 17**
- 4. \$15 million bond issue on SIFIC board agenda**
- 5. DNR hosts wood by-products workshop**

JUNE 30 – LAST DAY FOR CRP CONTRACT RENEWAL

DES MOINES – Landowners with existing Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contracts that expire in 2008, 2009 or 2010 have until June 30 to continue their contracts.

The local USDA Farm Service Agency notified landowners of renewal and extension offers in April. In response, landowners must sign up at their local FSA office by June 30, 2006, if they want to accept the offers.

“It’s tough to make a decision now about a 10- or 15-year contract that doesn’t start for two to four years,” said Lyle Asell, special assistant for agriculture at the DNR. “But, this is an offer that many landowners will want to take advantage of.

“For landowners, the contract offers guaranteed income on marginal land where yields are typically less than on land more suitable for cropping,” Asell said. “CRP is often the best choice for marginal cropland – for the landowner, for wildlife and for water quality.”

Producers will need to weigh the costs of converting the CRP land to cropland and ensuring that it can be farmed according to a conservation plan against the benefits of having it in a CRP contract. On steep hills or erosive soils, the restrictions of the conservation plan, such as adding terraces or farming with a cover crop, may mean that CRP is more attractive.

At stake in Iowa are more than 800,000 cropland acres that are currently planted to permanent covers of grass, grass-forb combinations or trees.

“For the public, these lands protect our water quality, by reducing the amounts of sediment, nutrients and pesticides that reach our streams and lakes,” Asell said.

Landowners who received the letter were given one of two choices:

- Re-enrollment for those with the most vulnerable soils that yield the greatest environmental benefits if they remain in CRP. Those contracts will be offered for 10 to 15 years, under a revised rental rate often higher than previous rates. Landowners will have to maintain the cover with disking or burning in the middle of the new contract.
- Extensions for land that is less erosive or has a less beneficial cover type. Extensions are offered for two to five years at the existing rental rate.

DNR biologists and foresters can help landowners with these decisions. Call the DNR Phone Center at (515) 281-5918 to find the biologist or forester that serves your county.

Or, stop by your local FSA, NRCS or Soil and Water Conservation District office for more information.

MEDIA CONTACTS: Bill Ehm at the DNR, (515) 281-4701; Paul Tauke at the DNR, (515) 242-6898; or Mike Musel at the Farm Service Agency State Office, (515) 254-1540 Ext. 440.

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FARMING PRACTICES, HABITAT RESTORATION IMPROVE IOWA’S TROUT STREAMS

Natural reproduction of trout observed in 29 streams

DECORAH — Northeast Iowa is known for its scenic trout streams. But a few years ago, Iowa’s trout streams were so muddy that only six streams supported a naturally reproducing trout population. Today, projects have improved water quality, and both trout and local communities are reaping the benefits.

The improvement came from projects on the land and in the streams. Trout depend on clear, clean and cold water to survive. However, sediment from farm fields and eroded streambanks was clouding the water and preventing trout from successfully spawning. That sediment, as well as nutrients and fertilizers, washed in from the watershed, or the area of land that drains into a stream.

To clean up the streams, the DNR has funded a number of watershed projects. Project coordinators work one-on-one with landowners to install conservation practices. These practices are ways of managing the land to reduce the amount of sediment, nutrients and bacteria reaching streams.

“We were losing a lot of soil into the streams. Too much mud makes spawning impossible,” said Bill Kalishek, a DNR fisheries biologist at the Decorah hatchery. “But now we’re changing the way water comes into the stream, and the trout are benefiting.”

Financial assistance from the projects’ funding helps landowners plant grass buffers and build structures like ponds and terraces. Other practices change how manure and fertilizer chemicals are managed, while the Conservation Reserve Program gives rental payments for taking erodible land out of production.

In addition, the DNR has also done in-stream habitat work. This work includes protecting streambanks and installing bank hides, which are wooden boxes placed underwater to provide trout overhead cover habitat and protection from predators.

“Our success in improving trout streams takes a lot of work to accomplish, but it’s a simple concept,” said Ubbo Agena, coordinator of the DNR’s nonpoint source pollution program. “Trout depend on clean water to survive, and water quality depends on how land in the watershed is managed. So, to keep trout thriving, watershed work needs to continue.”

Today, 29 trout streams boast naturally reproducing trout populations. One of those, Spring Falls, is part of the Elk Creek Watershed Project in Delaware County. That project reduced the amount of sediment reaching streams by 13,000 tons per year. That’s equal to about 1,444 dump truck loads of soil every year.

The improvements are evident in the trout. The brown trout population in Spring Falls, a tributary of Elk Creek, depended entirely on stocking in 1991. Now, there is a self-sustaining population that offers more than 1,000 trout per mile of stream.

Elk Creek is just one success story, one that benefits local businesses. As fishing improves, so does business for local shops, gas stations, hotels and restaurants. According to a 2001 DNR trout angler survey, licensed trout anglers made an estimated 372,338 trips to trout fisheries in Iowa. At approximately \$25 per day – that includes food, lodging, transportation and equipment – more than \$9.3 million is spent annually on trout fishing in Iowa.

“We do cater to the trout fisherman, and in northeast Iowa a big chunk of sales come from that. When they come, they come to buy,” said Dave Nading, owner of Nading’s Service and Sporting in Strawberry Point.

To keep Iowa’s trout streams a success, work in the watershed needs to continue. Current conservation practices need to be maintained, and new watersheds and miles of stream need projects.

“The landowners can be proud of what they’ve done,” said Bryan Hayes, DNR fisheries biologist at the Manchester trout hatchery. “But even when projects end, we need to build on what we started and maintain what we’ve put in place.”

Local watershed projects are sponsored by county Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Many of these projects are funded by the DNR. This funding is made possible through the Section 319 program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which provides DNR funding for nonpoint pollution programs. The DNR generally funds local watershed projects in cooperation with the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

- More information on Iowa’s watersheds is available at www.iowadnr.com/water/watershed/
- For more information on trout fishing, visit www.iowadnr.com/fish/
- A detailed brochure on trout stream improvements is available at www.iowadnr.com/water/nonpoint/brochure.html or by contacting Jess Brown at (515) 281-5131.

MEDIA CONTACTS: Ubbo Agena at (515) 281-6402 or Bill Kalishek at (563) 382-8324

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OPEN FEEDLOT RULES EFFECTIVE MAY 17

DES MOINES – Effective May 17, open feedlot owners and producers have design standards for building and expanding their operations.

These rules include conventional systems and alternatives to conventional systems, such as vegetative treatment systems.

Producers and engineers can find a copy of the new rules on the DNR Web site at www.iowadnr.com/afo/newrules.html.

Emergency rules that were substantially the same as the final version were passed on an emergency basis last fall.

MEDIA CONTACT: Gene Tinker, DNR, at (515) 281-3103.

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\$15 MILLION BOND ISSUE ON SIFIC BOARD AGENDA

Please Note: SIFIC Meeting Cancellation.

The State of Iowa Facilities Corporation (SIFIC) board of directors meeting has been canceled. Another meeting date has not been set.

The DNR regrets any inconvenience.

MEDIA CONTACT: Dan Lane, (515) 281-6696 or at Dan.Lane@dnr.state.ia.us

DES MOINES – The State of Iowa Facilities Improvement Corporation (SIFIC) board of directors will be asked to approve a \$15 million bond issue at its next meeting.

The meeting will be held on Monday, May 22, 2006 at 3:00 p.m. in the 4th floor west conference room of the Wallace State Office Building in Des Moines.

The bond issue will provide \$15 million for energy efficiency improvements and renewable energy projects at Iowa Department of Human Services' facilities in Woodward, Toldeo, Independence and Eldora.

MEDIA CONTACT: Dan Lane at (515) 281-6696 or at Dan.Lane@dnr.state.ia.us

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DNR HOSTS WOOD BY-PRODUCTS WORKSHOP

AINSWORTH – A workshop about converting wood by-products to energy resources will be held on Wednesday, June 7, 2006 at the Washington County Conservation Center in Ainsworth.

“The workshop will connect wood by-product generators with possible end users to use wood as a renewable energy resource,” said Jim Bodensteiner, program planner at the DNR. “There are a lot of wood by-products on the market and many opportunities to use them as a fuel source in industry and for applications such as fuel pellet production, among other uses. We hope to bridge this gap by bringing both sides together.”

Registration forms are available at www.iowadnr.com. The workshop costs \$25, if registered by June 1. Lunch and refreshments will be provided.

The workshop is sponsored by the Iowa DNR, the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities and Limestone Bluffs RC&D.

MEDIA CONTACT: Jim Bodensteiner at (515) 281-8416 or Jim.Bodensteiner@dnr.state.ia.us